

Review

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Dramaturgie der Oper. Von Heinrich Bulhaupt.
[Leipzig: Breitkopf und Härtel.]

THE story of the rise and progress of dramatic art has been told over and over again by many writers. Each has brought a special amount of ability to bear upon the subject, and all works of this character, in whatever tongue they are written, never fail to attract the general reader. The love for the stage and the delight in the stories which may be told concerning it knows no weakening. Therefore the present work is secure of an interested following. It treats of the development of the principles culminating in the Wagnerian music-drama, as exemplified in the works of the musicians and poets of the earliest time. Taking Gluck as his starting point the author incidentally treats of the labours of his predecessors as indicative of the state of art at the time when the composer of "Orpheus" sought to effect his reforms, not only in musical art, but in the dramaturgy of the opera. His sympathies are wholly with the German examples of operatic art, and as his researches have been chiefly directed towards its exaltation his work must be assessed from his own point of view. He tells nothing concerning Gluck that is not already well known, yet his manner is pleasant and shrewd even in telling old stories. He naturally dwells upon the music of Mozart at some length, selecting for critical examination four works "Die Entführung aus den Serail" ("The Seraglio"), "Figaro's Hochzeit" ("The Marriage of Figaro"), "Don Juan," and "Die Zauberflöte" ("The Magic Flute"), the "new mechanical comedy," as it was called, probably because of the mechanical effects introduced. The philosophical and Masonic references in this last-named opera are spoken of, and all the characters are, as in the other operas, minutely analysed. On Beethoven's only opera, "Fidelio," he dwells with pardonable fondness; but if he finds no great dramatic advance in the poem or in the music, he discovers it in Weber's "Der Freischütz," in "Euryanthe," and in "Oberon." The second volume is taken up by a short account of Meyerbeer, which occupies some thirty pages or so, and a long account of Wagner, to which some three hundred pages are devoted. The account of Meyerbeer, though proportionately of less dimensions than his admirers would hold to be commensurate with his deserts, is fair and impartial. The writer has reserved all his strength for the description of the author of "Rienzi," "Der Fliegende Holländer," "Tannhäuser," "Lohengrin," "Tristan und Isolde," "Die Meistersinger von Nürnberg," "Der Ring des Nibelungen," and "Parsifal," the latter of which he says, in spite of the merits of others, remains Wagner's last and greatest work. "Believing minds will say that it was the contemplation of the world from the lofty standpoint of the stars. It is a work of hope and presentiment. The blood which glows in the Graal chalice, illuminates and purifies that hope, vivifies the presentiment, and separates the mortal from the immortal. It is the crowning point of his career and of the phase of art he represented so ably. The building in Bayreuth where his dramas are given rises up as a monument of his desires and his aims. He attained as an artist more than most men during his lifetime by his works, and if upon that hill not one stone shall stand upon another, his spirit will live in his art creations. He will rank in the records of mankind as great as the immortals."

This concluding sentence is the key to the whole work, and is a fair evidence of the spirit in which the record has been made. Without questioning the right of Wagner to occupy a high position in art, there are few who will think that all those who prepared the way for him and worked honestly according to their lights were not of equal importance with him as factors in the development of the dramaturgy of the opera.

Sing to me. Duet for Soprano and Tenor. Music composed by Rosalind F. Ellicott. [Novello, Ewer and Co.]

THE words of this duet, by R. S. Hichens, are well written, and serve as the vehicle for a truly elegant musical idea. Miss Ellicott has a special gift of melody, and writes for voices so as to give them the best opportunities for effective display. The duet is altogether an excellent piece of writing, and should become very popular with vocalists.

Three Children's Cantatas. *Cinderella, Beauty and the Beast, and Lamplblack.* By Myles Birket Foster.
[Weekes and Co.]

THESE three Cantatas were written and composed for the Keighley Schools, but they are equally available for like purposes in other localities. The lines which once defined the boundaries of school teaching have been broken down in places where non-sectarian teaching prevails, and a greater field for the practical use of subjects taught to children has been opened. The hymn tune, or the simple song, no longer satisfies the demands of school teachers. Cantatas to sacred or secular words are in great request. Without entering into the question as to whether these things are of the value claimed for them, or whether the time taken up for their study and acquirement is of any considerable advantage among the multitude of subjects taught to children, it will be enough to say that those who approve of the use of Cantatas for young folk cannot do better than make acquaintance with these works of Mr. Foster. His music is pretty and ear-catching, and the treatment and accompaniments exhibit much artistic taste.

Ruth. A Dramatic Oratorio. By F. H. Cowen. Tonic Sol-fa Edition. [Novello, Ewer and Co.]

THERE is no need to describe this latest work from the pen and brain of one of the most popular of our English musicians. It is only necessary to call attention to the fact that it has been translated into Tonic Sol-fa notation for the benefit of those who prefer that method to the more general manner of writing and printing music. This special edition, which has been prepared by the skilled hand of Mr. W. G. McNaught, will introduce the Oratorio to a number of new admirers.

Services of Song. [Novello, Ewer and Co.]

MESSRS. NOVELLO'S series of Services of Sacred Song, edited by Dr. Troutbeck, has recently been enlarged by the addition of two services on New Testament subjects, one by the Rev. H. Aldrich Cotton, Minor Canon of Westminster, on "St. John the Evangelist," the other by the Rev. E. Price, who is a member of the same body, on "St. John the Baptist."

Both the new Services of Song, especially that on "St. John the Evangelist," appear to have been compiled with care, discrimination, and completeness; and to be, like their predecessors in the series, types of what those who like and use such services would desire. They will, moreover, we think, go far to reconcile to their use those who are as yet averse to Services of Song. For convenience they are divided into several scenes or parts, like the others in the series, in such a manner that the whole of each service, should it be found too long, need not necessarily be gone through at one time. The hymns are excellently chosen, and are chiefly set to tunes selected from the Hymnary.

Mr. Cotton, we notice, has introduced several Anthems as alternatives, should the powers of the choirs engaged warrant their introduction. We are glad to remark that these new services have appeared at so suitable a time of the year. It is unnecessary to add that the letterpress and music are models of clear printing.

Magnificat and Nunc dimittis, set to music in the key of E flat. By F. Kilvington Hattersley.

[Novello, Ewer and Co.]

THE composer of this setting of the Magnificat and Nunc dimittis will be remembered as the author of a spirited Overture which was performed at the last Leeds Festival. He is one among many of the musicians of Yorkshire who are striving to prove themselves worthy of the art they profess. His music in this case is melodious and effective, but it is less original either in design or treatment than might have been expected from his former work. He has not disdained taking a hint from Dr. Martin's treatment of the Magnificat in harmonising for voices a melody previously heard as a solo. Young composers will follow a model for a time. It is the preliminary condition of those who would gain strength to be able to assert their independence. There is, however, much that shows earnestness of purpose and promise of goodness in the music before us.